

North Augusta High School

2000 Knobcone Avenue

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Aiken County School District

Principal

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### Case Statement North Augusta High School Improvement Council

The North Augusta High School Improvement Council has been a collaborative, dynamic committee during the 2011-12 school year. The demographics of our school includes total enrollment of 1479 students with slightly more than 1/3 of students on a free/reduced lunch program, 60% white, 35% black and 5% Hispanic/Latino. We are very proud of the involvement we have at the high school level in a School Improvement Council. The dominate issue facing our school is a major renovation addressed as a failed bond referendum in 2010. Approval of this initiative would have been a new high school that has now changed to a 25-40 year plan to update the physical facilities. Despite this setback, we have continued to improve many areas of the school and have actively participated in a new strategy for our campus improvements.

As the only high school in North Augusta, the racial and ethnic breakdowns are closely related to the ethnic and racial distribution of North Augusta. In 2007, North Augusta, which is located on the westernmost border of South Carolina and on the Savannah River, had a population of 20,732 and a median household income of \$46,238. The median household income indicates that the majority of students come from middle class families. Many of the professional jobs of our residents include the hospital systems of Augusta, Savannah River Site, Fort Gordon and out of the city limits. Although the majority of students do come from middle class households, a large portion are still economically disadvantaged. Of the 1582 students enrolled in 2009-2010, 530 received free lunch and 130 received reduced rates for lunch.

North Augusta High School's market consists of students and parents who live in the North Augusta area. As a bordering town to Augusta, North Augusta also receives many students from Augusta who are seeking a better alternative to some of the failing Richmond County schools. These main components of the market are interested in having students graduate from high school with the skills needed to either pursue higher education or have the certification to enter into a career. Other aspects of the high school's market include the colleges who will be accepting the students, various local business owners, non-profit organizations, and government organizations.

Major initiatives of the SIC addressed the following topics: traffic concerns, Freshman Academy, elected official communication, student recognition and school facility improvements.

**Traffic** concerns involve a congested time frame during school opening and dismissal hours. The SIC involved the North Augusta Public Safety Department and SC Department of Transportation to discuss improved traffic flow to allow for a safer, more efficient system. Possible improvements identified include road striping updates, one way traffic, altering ingress and egress points, maintaining bus only traffic on certain roadways and expanded parking lots for students driving to school.

SIC Vice-Chairman Freddie Grimm met with SC DOT officials and local state elected representatives to analyze the traffic issue and collectively offer solutions. These meetings were fruitful in identifying design considerations that are included in proposed facility improvements for the school.

**Freshman Academy** has successfully worked in other high schools and NAHS began the process of designing a workable scenario for our use. Freshman year in high school is a time of excitement and expectation. It is a time when young people discover who they are and more importantly, who they can become. The transition from middle school to high school is a big step in a young person's life. The Academy has created a team approach that shapes a common purpose toward developing a sense of community and a strong commitment to student achievement. In February, tours of the school were led by FBLA students inviting PTA and Advisory Council members to provide an opportunity to see up close the learning environment of students.

Teachers were asked to volunteer both with suggestions and as Freshman Advisory staff. Bell schedules are designed to be different in the morning hours from the general school population to allow for less congested class changes and students are sent to exploratory classes during the afternoon. All morning classes are in the same hallway allowing for a contained environment, along with lockers, to make this challenging transition from middle school to high school.

Our goal is to assist incoming ninth graders in adjusting to high school standards, expectations, and routines. The School Improvement Council served a vital role in the creation of Freshman Academy and helping North Augusta High School make these goals a reality by acting as a sounding board to the community and providing feedback on parts of the plan as the school got closer to implementation. We were a visible presence throughout the development process, especially in pushing the expo and the meet and greet to the community.

The Academy is a "school within a school," not the model of isolation some feared. Students participate in the high school activities navigating less congested hallways and have teams of teachers who work together to ensure that student needs are met at the highest possible level. Collaboration goes far beyond the school itself and encompasses the entire community such as the SIC team, parents, students, and community members who are all vital in creating a successful Freshman Academy program.

To promote open communications with elected officials, our local SC House 83 representative Bill Hixon was invited to attend our February meeting. He spoke about funding measures before the House and was instrumental in communicating to other elected officials our desire to meet on an annual basis. A tour of all Area 2 schools, i.e. NAHS and their feeder schools, was attended by Rep. Hixon and hosted by School Board member Ray Fleming for 2 ½ hours per school over a multiple week period. They also visited our Aiken County Career Center that serves all Aiken County students. This was a significant investment of time to better understand our facility and instructional needs. Future meetings are to be scheduled for this exchange of information with an expanded list of elected officials to include the SC Senate and House to further educate them on the school challenges of our community, our county and our state.

Ways to improve academic performance among at risk groups lead the North Augusta High School SIC to form a quarterly **Student Recognition Lunch** program in an effort to reward students that worked hard to overcome behavioral issues, perform better academically and/or improve attendance. The Recognition Lunch was planned in a way that allows students to feel praise and encourage continued improvements. SIC committee members worked

with local businesses to sponsor these quarterly lunches. Faculty members were provided with a lunch ticket to be awarded to one student that met the needed criteria per nine weeks. The student selected must have diligently worked to pull up a low grade, move from being absent often to regular attendance or shown a pattern of improved, responsible behavior to qualify. In addition to the Pizza Party Lunch, students were allowed to socialize during an extended lunch period. Recipients were announced during announcements on recognition day with a note of praise for a job well done. Positive reinforcement is up to ten times more effective in eliminating negative behaviors and impacting academic success. To this end, we feel that the Student Recognition lunches that are a recurring event at North Augusta High School are moving both our school and students in a forward direction.

Meetings were held with SIC and Administration at the North Augusta elementary and middle schools to explain the need for updates and improvements in our facilities. These meetings were also to encourage attendance at the tours we were organizing. Many of the attendees of the tours filled out a survey. The media did extensive coverage of the tours and devoted print space to our plight. SIC Secretary Dea Baldwin was instrumental in organizing a morning breakfast in an effort to get feedback from school PTO/SIC/Administration of all Area II schools. This meeting was a brainstorming session where we worked on future ways to inform the community.

In summary, the North Augusta High School Improvement Council had a banner year of involvement and accomplishment. The groundwork set from this active committee will continue to be a driving force in improving the quality of education and the high school experience for students, faculty and parents. Your consideration to recognize our hard work is very much appreciated.



# NORTH AUGUSTA HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Dick and Tunky Riley Selection Committee,

Three years ago, our small School Improvement Council (SIC) made it clear to me that they had a vision for North Augusta High School (NAHS) and the ambition to see it through. They actively advertised and recruited impacting, diverse members of our community, resulting in twenty-six highly active members. The group has clear goals and a vision. The goals of implementing a successful Freshman Academy, outreach to community and elected officials, recognition of students and facility, and traffic improvement represent a broad spectrum of school needs addressed by our SIC.

The approach that our SIC has supported has resulted in a seamless implementation of a unique Freshman Academy after a full two-year study. The SIC has been a conduit to the community to educate and inform our citizens. The information shared with the SIC by the principal, teachers who visited other schools, students and research by council members created questions and data for consideration in the implementation. Our student SIC membership last year indicated the need for more integration of Freshmen with Upper-Classmen than other models so there could be greater social opportunities. Freshman Academies primarily focus on at-risk populations. Our SIC made recommendations for an all-inclusive academy. Our honors students have classes in the same geographic region as the rest of the students and can enter into the new "North Augusta Honors Academy" for four years of challenging academic rigor. The SIC helped with a community expo and parent information meetings. While it is too soon for conclusive data about success, we have only recommended one student for expulsion through nine weeks of school, while eleven were recommended through the same period a year ago. Teacher grade distributions through the first nine weeks suggest the long term failure rate will likely be very low.

Members felt the need to involve our elected officials and parents of future students in order to provide for the fast-evolving needs of our facility and district schools in general. A failed referendum several years ago has the SIC actively working with the School Board to generate support for facilities district-wide. Last year, the SIC organized visitation by parents of elementary and middle school students. Our students provided tours and a working lunch was provided so the parents could then share their thoughts and concerns about the school. The SIC discussed how these parents could become part of grass roots effort for improvement. This outreach continued with the organization of a visit by elected officials. We had seven elected officials tour the building. Five media outlets covered the tour and lunch discussion meeting that followed. It is the single most informative piece of media covering options for school facility improvement we have seen locally.

One consequence of a facility designed for nearly half the current population is a dangerous congestion of traffic daily. Our SIC formed a Traffic Committee and brought in our state representative and city traffic engineers to observe and collect data. Many of their recommendations are for the planned renovation starting in a year. Successful implementation of other recommendations, such as changes to the bus loop and traffic flow, have already begun.

In meetings, it was often discussed that we needed to address our at-risk population with positive behavior intervention. The SIC created a Student of the Quarter recognition that focused on students who showed improved behavior, attendance, or academic performance. These students were recognized with an extended lunch where they enjoy pizza, drinks and dessert. The SIC turned the program over to the PTSA to ensure its continuation over time.

I hope you agree that the North Augusta High School Improvement Council is among the most active in the state. Many members were outspoken about the need not for recognition, but for the positive media for the group's vision that would accompany this prestigious award. That motivation alone leaves me honored to be a part of this group. Should you have questions, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,

  
J. Todd Borscheuer, Principal NAHS

November 1, 2012

I am writing this letter to recommend the North Augusta High School (NAHS) School Improvement Council (SIC) for the Dick and Tunky Riley Award. Increasing parent and community member engagement with our public schools is a high priority for schools across our state. Year after year, the data show that the percentage of parent/community members involved in helping improve our high schools is a small fraction of the involvement seen at the elementary level. Such is not the case at NAHS. Over the past two years, the SIC at that school has developed into a formidable force for positive change and improvement in several areas of the school's life. A powerful combination of students, teachers, parents, community members, and school administration have worked together to address issues crucial not only to the school's current needs, but to those of the foreseeable future.

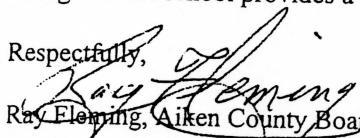
Enrollment at NAHS is currently about 1500 students. The campus is confined to a relatively small parcel of land surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Ingress/egress routes to the campus are very crowded at the start and end of the school day due to both student and nearby residential vehicular traffic. The situation has presented several safety concerns. Members of the SIC took the initiative to meet with city, SC House, and DOT officials to make them aware of the traffic issues. They have worked with those same officials to develop solutions that will vastly improve traffic safety for students, school staff, and community members. The SIC has had to commit time and effort to this activity over a period of several months. Perseverance by the SIC has been a critical factor.

NAHS was built in 1969 for an enrollment of 900 students. Subsequent facility additions increased the capacity to about 1200. With an enrollment of 1500 and expectations of pending growth, the school is not only overcrowded, but lacks features commonly associated with a quality learning environment. Nine portable classrooms are in daily use; thirteen science teachers share six outdated, ill-equipped science labs; many classrooms are too small for the number of students in them; bathrooms are insufficient in number; hallways are so narrow as to restrict easy student movement; and technology enhancements are structurally limited. A district-wide bond referendum in 2010 to address these needs was defeated. The NAHS SIC refused to take this as the final answer. They have mobilized parents and members of our community to alert them to the facility needs of NAHS and of other schools in the district. They recently invited state, county, and city elected officials to tour the school to see firsthand the pressing need for a completely renovated high school. Following the tour, the elected officials, student tour guides, and SIC members had a lively discussion regarding the school's needs. The SIC is reaching out to other parent groups in the district to unite forces advocating for adequate learning environments for all children. SIC members plan to attend a November meeting of the local delegation to affirm their support for additional funding for school facilities.

The SIC also took a hands-on approach to student recognition and teacher appreciation. While such events are fairly common at elementary schools, they are much less so at the high school level. SIC members organized quarterly pizza lunches for students selected by their teachers for having made praiseworthy improvements in their grades, behavior, and attendance. Each teacher in the school selects one student each quarter. The structure of the program provides an opportunity for a diverse range of students to be recognized. Feedback from both students and teachers has been very positive. Also, metal "dog tags" with the school's logo and the words "I Believe" are handed out by teachers in recognition of positive student behavior. The "dog tags" are much sought after prizes. Finally, the SIC has organized breakfasts for teachers as a way to say thank-you for what they do and to reaffirm the important role they play in educating our children.

The diverse representation of the NAHS SIC, the really tough issues it has tackled, and the positive attention it has brought to the school provides a model for other SICs across our district and state.

Respectfully,

  
Ray Fleming, Aiken County Board of Education



# House of Representatives

State of South Carolina

**William M. "Bill" Hixon**

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**Committee:**

Agriculture, Natural Resources  
and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Interstate Cooperation – Treasurer

November 15, 2012

SC-SIC Board of Trustees Awards Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to recommend the SIC at North Augusta High School for the Riley Award. It has been my pleasure in the last several months to experience, firsthand, some of the group's activities by assisting them in some of their work. I sincerely hope that I am able to be of additional help in the future.

The NAHS that I graduated from in 1976 has changed tremendously. Student enrollment has expanded far beyond the capacity for which the school was built. In addition, the quality of the learning environment, especially with regards to science and technology, is not what it should be due to the many structural limitations of the school. The SIC recognizes this and has become an energized advocate for rebuilding the school on its current footprint. They recently invited myself and other elected officials to tour the campus. It was a very eye-opening tour. The SIC then engaged us in a lively discussion, over lunch, of the school's needs and possible ways to fund solutions to those needs. I was impressed by the diversity of the group's members and their willingness to take on collective and individual responsibility. Several of them traveled 20 miles last night to attend a meeting of the local delegation, at which the school board made a presentation on district-wide facility funding issues, including those at NAHS.

The school sits on a relatively small parcel of land. It is also in close proximity to several residential areas. A much used state-owned road, which carries traffic to and from those neighborhoods, runs adjacent to the school. As a result, vehicular congestion (cars and school buses) around the school, and its associated safety concerns, is an issue the SIC has tackled. The SIC took the initiative to contact me for assistance. I was able to connect them with the county DOT representative. Together, SIC members and DOT made in-field studies of the traffic issues and took many pictures to document the situation. As a result of the SIC's efforts, NAHS is now on a DOT priority list to get a state engineer in to pursue solutions. All of this will take time, but the SIC did the necessary work to get the ball rolling. SIC members also used their contact with the DOT representative to solicit ideas on changes that can be made at the local level to improve traffic flow for students, faculty, and community members.

As an elected representative, I have been pleased to see the vigor and commitment with which the SIC (students, parents, faculty, and community members) is going about its work.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Hixon".

Representative William "Bill" Hixon  
House District 83

The North Augusta High School Improvement Council continues the productive 2011-12 school year in a variety of ways as we enter a new school year. Meeting in July, the committee worked on a strategic long range plan as the 2012-13 issues and beyond were identified.

Application of the Riley Award became a focus of the SIC. A successful first round submission was rewarded with a semi-finalist notification. This recognition became highly visible in the community as noted in the supplementary folder of this application. Plans are formed for a contingent of SIC members to attend the March Award banquet regardless of our hopeful anticipation of selection for the finals.

Traffic SIC member, Fred Grimm, along with State Representative Bill Hixon and a representative of the State Transportation office met during school hours to observe traffic flow and offer potential solutions. Areas of concern include a single road for buses to exit and enter school grounds due to turning radius and the need for additional crosswalks, sidewalks and handicap parking. It has been confirmed that congested travel lanes are the property of SC DOT and they will continue to study traffic patterns and install lane paint to ease congestion.

To promote open communications with elected officials, a site visit was arranged in October with State Senators Tom Young and Shane Massey, County Council Chairman Ronnie Young, Will Williams of the Aiken-Edgefield Economic Development Partnership, School Superintendent Dr. Beth Everitt and Academic Officer Dr. Tim Yarborough. Discussions centered on alternate funding methods that may include an educational capital sales tax that would allow a one-cent sales tax increase for 15 years-pending voter approval. Currently only two counties are permitted to have this option and both are exercising their option. It has also been a focus of the SIC to invite community leaders to meetings including the Chamber of Commerce President, City Administrator, NA 2000 Executive Director and various School District personnel.

Polo shirts were made available for purchase that gives community visibility for SIC members. A letter to the Editor was submitted from SIC Chair Will Barnes and SIC member Fred Grimm to inform citizens of the funding issues facing the facility improvements. The Student Recognition Lunch program has been transferred to the PTSA after a successful start from the SIC. The PTSA's ability to generate funds and handle money makes the organization an ideal location for the program. A school motto was instituted, "I Believe....", and has become a theme in our communications to students and the community.

As a method to promote the SIC mission to the students, school groups are invited every month to present their activities at our meetings. Up to our submission date, Freshman Academy, the FBLA service project, the Culinary Arts students, and the Beta Club have participated. "High Schools That Work" has become a new initiative with representation of SIC members fostering more community involvement through communication and volunteer opportunities.

The North Augusta High School Improvement Council has continued outstanding levels of participation, significant issue generated activity and a very positive exposure in the community. The bar has been set very high for our group and has been met with enthusiasm and resolve. "I Believe" continues to be a driving force in our efforts as we complete our mission and goals. We hope to be a model for other Aiken County SIC's as well as other Councils across the state.

Respectfully submitted,

North Augusta High School Improvement Council